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Montana NARAL Convention

Max S. Baucus

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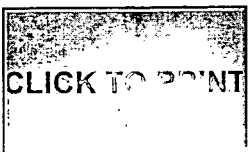
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(2) Subject* **Address to Montana NARAL Convention**

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2602

Address to Montana NARAL Convention

Senator Max Baucus
Great Falls, Montana

October 28, 1995

I'm very happy to see you all.

It's great to see so many old friends here. Joy McGrath. Diane Sands. Mary Dussault. Lee Hipsher. And Susan Long. I want to congratulate Eliza Frazer in particular for putting the convention together and thank you all for inviting me to speak.

I remember back when I first ran for the Montana Legislature. Must be two, three years ago now. Really it was 1972. Susan was right there in Missoula going door-to-door with me back then, and we've been shoulder to shoulder in every campaign since then.

THE 1996 CONGRESS

Well, we've been through a lot over the years. And we have won our share.

But this year is different. Because this is the most ideological, partisan Congress I've ever seen. Bob Dole is the Presidential candidate of the Republican "moderates." Larry Craig came up to me one day and said, "Max, I've just been to the House, and these new guys make me look like a liberal."

It's an odd irony that this summer we had the 75th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage. Montana is of course proud to have elected the first woman to Congress: Jeannette Rankin. And the Congress chose to mark this anniversary with a round of happy speeches, some talk about bringing the statue of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton into the Capitol Rotunda - and then an avalanche of proposals for anti-women laws.

Among the ideas making the rounds:

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN 1995

- A proposal to let states deny Medicaid funds for abortion for poor women who are victims of rape and incest.
- Repeal of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. A thoughtful response to the murders of two people at women's clinics by a psychotic in Boston last summer.

- Bar any American assistance to family planning programs overseas.
- And repeal Title X provision of family planning. Again, repeal it. Give no support to voluntary family planning. Family planning used to be something even the pro-life groups in Congress would support.

That is just the beginning. I don't know whether you can say it gets worse as you look down the list, but it certainly doesn't get any better.

Think of the arrogance of decreeing -- as the House of Representatives has done -- that nobody on a government health insurance plan can opt to use the plan for abortion services. What business is it of theirs?

Imagine the hypocrisy of passing a law -- as the House of Representatives has done -- to say Planned Parenthood cannot state its views to the government because they get a few thousand dollars to promote family planning. And then to say defense contracting companies which make tens of billions of dollars in federal weapons procurement contracts can lobby until they're blue in the face.

And remember the lies and slander used against Dr. Henry Foster, whose opponents even sank to the depth of accusing him of participating in medical experiments on black men.

Well, I met Dr. Foster myself. He is a good man. And the attacks they made on him were so weird, so bizarre and so flatly untrue that he had trouble even getting angry about them. I asked him what he thought about it all, and he just kind of looked puzzled and shook his head.

IDEOLOGY AND IGNORANCE

Then think about the really mind-boggling ignorance of the people making these laws. It's the Speaker of the House saying women don't make good soldiers because they get "infections." Or the fellow in the North Carolina legislature who said rape victims can't get pregnant because "the juices don't flow." These people are making the government's health policy.

You sort of alternate between outrage and laughter. But there are real consequences when people feel free to report rumors as truth, make up things and tell lies.

The extremism, ignorance and dishonesty that create bad laws in Washington mean violence and terrorism here at home and around the country. The doctor murdered in Florida. The two young people killed in Massachusetts. The Blue Mountain Women's Clinic bombed in Missoula and Dr. Wicklund stalked and threatened in Bozeman.

EDUCATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Then let's look at education.

These folks say they don't like abortion and they do like marriage. Well, here is a statistic for them. Sixty percent of teenage mothers are high school dropouts. There is no better way to reduce teenage motherhood and abortion than to support education.

Well, they are going to cut assistance to elementary and secondary education by a third. They are going to cut one federal dollar in three. Instead, they believe they can fight teen pregnancy by telling teenage girls their babies can expect no support from the government. The result of their policy will be more abortion and more abused and neglected children.

MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Then let's review what's happening with Medicaid. Today we have a debate over whether to make abortion a Medicaid option. There are attempts to deny it to victims of rape and incest, and they are outrageous.

But let me tell you something, if this program of block-granting Medicaid goes through, that debate is over. It is finished. Medicaid will pay for no abortion services at all, because Medicaid will no longer keep up with inflation.

Medicaid is the fastest-growing area of government services. It is growing at about 10% a year. And both the Senate and the House are likely to turn it into a so-called "block grant." When you put that in ordinary English, it means we will no longer base Medicaid spending on how many poor and elderly people they are and how sick they are. Instead, we will base Medicaid spending on how much Congress wants to help these people out in a given year.

So Medicaid will come up against defense spending, tax loopholes for business and so on. Some pretty tough opponents. In the end, Congress will cut Medicaid. And ultimately, all the Medicaid health services will be pitted against one another.

Do we pay for immunization this year or nursing homes? Preventive medicine or emergency services? There will be no abortion coverage at all. And there will be less and less money to give poor people any health coverage for family planning, teen pregnancy prevention, prenatal care, immunization or anything else.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

I don't want to leave you with a picture where every color is a shade of black. A couple of weeks ago we had a very important win.

That involved the support for women who have been beaten up and are otherwise victims of violent crime. Last year, in the crime bill, we created an entirely new set of services for women who are victims of crime, whether in the home or elsewhere.

This year, Senator Gramm wanted to eliminate that. Excuse me for the inside baseball, but a little bit is necessary here. Spending bills go through the Appropriations Subcommittees. And when the Senate changed over, Phil Gramm from Texas became Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee that handles money for law enforcement. And he sent out a bill that practically cut it in half, from \$175 million to \$100 million.

That is money dedicated to enforce laws against domestic violence and child abuse in rural areas. Grants for arrest programs in violence against women cases. Advocacy services for victims of child abuse.

But when the Senate as a whole considered that bill, it decided Senator Gramm was wrong. It took a look at the program, and most people, Republican or Democrat, decided it makes no sense to eliminate this kind of service. And we put it all back.

FROM 1994 TO 1996

Well, that's one bright spot in a pretty dim year.

A lot of odd things are going on in Washington. And it is easy for us to point a finger and say, well, it is all their fault. People always want to say that Washington is screwy but everyone here at home is full of good common sense. I yield to that temptation myself sometimes.

But in reality it's not that easy. Ultimately, we have an elected government. Congress is elected, the Montana Legislature is elected, the President is elected. And an elected government reflects the will of the people. More accurately, it reflects the will of that fraction of the people who go out and vote.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates the point. Last weekend Patty Murray came out from Washington to visit us in Missoula. It was really very nice of her -- she had put together a letter endorsing me from the five Democratic women Senators.

Patty said that in 1992, when she was elected to the Senate, she got one million, two hundred thousand votes. It was a close race. Her opponent got about one million, twenty-one thousand votes. So Patty won by about 180,000.

Then last year, in 1994, Slade Gorton also won a close race. He got 948,000 votes -- a lot less than Patty's opponent got two years earlier. But he won because his opponent, Ron Sims, from Seattle, got 752,000 votes.

So today Patty Murray is a Senator and Ron Sims is not. And the reason is not that a lot of people in Washington changed sides. It is that about 450,000 people who voted for Patty Murray in 1992 decided not to show up in 1994. A whole lot of people with something at stake decided they had better things to do that Tuesday than vote. And that happened all over the country.

CONCLUSION

Well, we are proud of Jeannette Rankin and the Women's Suffrage anniversary, and rightly so. We are proud of the right to vote. But the fact is, the right to vote doesn't mean much if we don't use it. Or, as Plato says, if you refuse to participate in politics you doom themselves to be governed by their inferiors.

So it is up to all of us to make sure that doesn't happen again. We have to start working now, and working hard. I am counting on you -- and you know you can count on me.

Thank you all, friends. We have a lot of work ahead. But we are going to get it done. Because we are in this together. And we are in it to win.